

'2018 has been a game changer for ITQ and the travel industry'

2018 HAS BEEN A REMARKABLY SUCCESSFUL YEAR FOR INTERGLOBE TECHNOLOGY QUOTIENT (ITQ), SAYS ITS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, SANDEEP DWIVEDI, IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW TO TNH.



Sandeep Dwivedi
Chief Operating Officer, InterGlobe
Technology Quotient (ITQ)

BY PREM KUMAR

Q How has been 2018 for ITQ? What were your achievements in the year?

2018 has been a remarkable year for ITQ. We are the believers of innovation and customer satisfaction; keeping this approach at the core of our business, we are proud to have set new milestones this year. Being the members of travel and tourism fraternity, we all know how technology has taken a front seat in recent years. And, 2018 has been a game changer year for ITQ as well as our fellow members of the industry.

Talking about our achievements, ITQ has come this far with flying colours. Undoubtedly, providing technologically advanced solutions to our clientele has been the prime area of focus in the year.

In this line, some of our major achievements include:

- Travelport won a competitive tender for being the sole distribution supplier to Air India for its domestic flight content in the Indian market.
- Travelport and Jet Airways have signed a new long-term supplier agreement, commencing April 2019. Leveraging the wide network and codeshare alliances of the airline, travel agents (online and offline) would be able to easily shop, book and manage itineraries for leisure and business travellers.
- Travelport has become the first GDS operator to provide NDC content. This means it can manage the live booking of flights using IATA's NDC technical standard.

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Q What new technologies, programmes and tools did you introduce in 2018?

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ment companies to airlines, hotels, car rental companies etc.

Travelport Smartpoint 8.1, which is the latest version of this travel commerce platform is equipped with the latest tools and features to make travel booking, selling and sharing much simplified, faster and hassle-free than before. The best part about 8.1 version is that it enables businesses to provide customisation options to its users that ultimately boosts productivity and improves the customer experience.

Q Travelport recently won the bid to distribute Air India's domestic flight content in India, a move that was opposed by travel agents. Your comment.

The Air India contract for sole distribution of its travel content was awarded to Travelport post a competitive bidding process at the airline's own discretion on the basis of technological capability credentials and it's a great achievement for the company. We, being the official distributor of Travelport in the Indian market, welcome this as an endorsement of their technology and world-class services in the home market of Air India. Also, the contract will enable the travel commerce platform to extend its technologically advanced solutions and best-in-class services to the airline. Travelport's rich content and branding will enable the airline to deliver better value for money and a superior distribution to its customers in the domestic and international market from Indian POS

(point of sale). In addition, Travelport has seen a rapid expansion in India in recent years following the acquisition of the business from the largest OTAs such as MMT, Goibibo, Yatra, EMT and ClearTrip as well as working with the major corporate travel agencies and new entrants in the travel sector such as PayTM. Having exclusive distribution rights of 6E has also played a vital role. Travelport has also expanded its footprint and capabilities with leading hotel groups and aggregators in India such as Oberoi, Taj, Treebo and Trident etc.

Q How has Travelport's presence grown in India in the last couple of years?

Travelport, renowned as the leading travel commerce platform worldwide for rendering distribution, technology, payment and other travel tech solutions, contributes to the \$7.6 trillion global travel and tourism industry. Since its inception in 1971, the company has its presence in more than 170 countries throughout the world. ITQ is the official distributor of Travelport in 6 markets across Asia Pacific region including India and Sri Lanka.

Considering the Indian aviation sector, Travelport is completely redefining the way of doing travel business. It has acted as a bridge between the travel agencies, travel providers, corporations and developers to search, share, buy and sell travel.

According to the results of a Global Traveler Survey conducted by Travel-

port, Indian travellers came out to be the most digitally advanced among 16,000 travellers across 25 countries analysed. This shows how technology is making its way into the Indian aviation sector. The latest development of Travelport's presence in the Indian market can be attributed to Air India choosing the travel commerce platform as its sole distribution supplier.

Further, leading Indian OTAs including MakeMyTrip, Yatra and Goibibo leverage the extensive travel database of Travelport to provide the best deals to their end customers. In a nutshell, Travelport is expanding in the Indian market and what's interesting to see is that even the Indian travel businesses are also welcoming it with open arms!

Q How do you see the role of GDS evolving in overall travel distribution space?

We all know, how GDS has made its way successfully into the travel distribution market worldwide. Let's not forget the times when booking a ticket was such a time-consuming, manual and complicated process. Thanks to the dawn of GDS era, the gap between airlines and travel agents has been bridged.

In recent years, there is a huge expansion in travel booking via GDS platform and the amount of security, reliability and speed it provides to the airlines and hotels is simply commendable. Going by a study of IATA, the future of GDS is very bright and wide; it will form a strong e-commerce travel platform for the travel distribution industry. If it works in compliance with the ever-changing needs of the airlines and hospitality industry, the day is not far when GDS will lead the travel industry.